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Everyone's Country Estate: a History of Minnesota's State Parks/ Iowa's State Parks: Also Forests, Recreation Areas, and Preserves

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monies in December 1939, he remarked, "I thank God I was warring on the gridirons of the midwest and not on the battlefields of Europe" (36). By September 1941, however, worsening European conditions prompted Kinnick to enlist in the Navy. Ground school training, aerial lessons, and other military activities fill much of Kinnick's diary and letters thereafter.

A Hero Perished is far more than just a football book. It is a welcome addition to the growing literature on notable Iowans and should appeal to those interested in Iowa history in general and in biographies, sports, and the military in particular. Some letters include inconsequential items, which perhaps should have been deleted. Kinnick's spelling errors and inconsistent style occasionally distract the reader. The reader also may want to know more about what Kinnick wrote to friends and their replies to him. Despite these minor shortcomings, the book deftly paints a portrait of a gifted, active, decent, yet vulnerable young man, one who deserves widespread admiration for his principles, loyalty, and dedication at a critical stage of history.

Everyone's Country Estate: A History of Minnesota's State Parks, by Roy W. Meyer. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991. xviii, 357 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Iowa's State Parks: Also Forests, Recreation Areas, and Preserves, by Robert Charles Wolf. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991. xi, 224 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendixes, index. \$21.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY REBECCA CONARD, PHR ASSOCIATES

Similar cover photographs invite readers to open both of these books: sun-specked woods on *Everyone's Country Estate*, flower-festooned woods on *Iowa's State Parks*. The contents of each, however, are decidedly different. Roy Meyer approaches the history of Minnesota's state park system in familiar chronological fashion. Roy Wolf presents Iowa's parks geographically, with brief historical summaries included as part of each description.

Meyer makes it clear at the beginning that *Everyone's Country Estate* is not an interpretive or analytical history, but his opinions on certain issues of park management are evident from time to time. Although the text proceeds chronologically, Meyer divides the story into ten chapters that establish more clearly the evolutionary process inherent in the growth of the Minnesota system. Chapter headings

take the reader from "beginnings" (1885–1895) through "slow expansion" (1895–1915) and "rudiments" (1915–1925). The author then proceeds to chart growth "under the Conservation Commission" (1925–1935) and through a decade of "professionalism and expansion" (1935–1945). After "years of slow growth" (1942–1952) caused by World War II, the chronology continues to the present. Within each chapter, individual state parks are discussed under separate subheadings. As a result, one can read cover-to-cover for a comprehensive account of the growth and development of the entire system, which includes over one hundred properties, or consult discrete sections to learn the basic history of particular parks, monuments, waysides, and trails—some of which are no longer part of the official state system.

For the cover-to-cover reader, one of the drawbacks of the park-by-park chronology is that the structure becomes repetitious. Meyer counterbalances this redundancy by highlighting different themes as he moves from one park to the next. For instance, his discussion of Itasca State Park (established 1891) documents nearly two decades of constant struggle to acquire land from lumber companies or associated private interests. In another vein, his discussion of Whitewater State Park (1919) provides a good, brief case study of conflicting and changing ideas among local residents and state park officials concerning the public value of state parks and their use. One also learns that Whitewater and Flandreau State Parks held prisoner-of-war camps during World War II, and camouflage maneuvers were carried out in Blue Mounds State Park.

What emerges from the whole, though, is a general sense of the ways in which Minnesota and Iowa systems differ. Minnesota's system grew with no overall planning, while Iowa's first Board of Conservation, organized in 1918, immediately set an agenda by identifying ninety-eight sites worthy of acquisition in a 1919 report titled *Iowa Parks: Conservation of Iowa Historic, Scenic, and Scientific Areas*. Minnesota has purchased the vast majority of its park units, while Iowa citizens have donated countless parcels for state park use. From Meyer's account, it also appears that public support for recreational grounds may have been the force that launched Minnesota's park system, while Iowa's early-day park advocates and stewards were chiefly motivated by resource conservation values.

Meyer often writes from an uncritical assumption that present-day park policies are better than those of the past. This is perhaps because his research indicates that Minnesota lacked any coherent state park development and management policy until the late 1930s, when State Parks Director Harold W. Lathrop cooperated with the

National Park Service to study his system and make recommendations for its future. Since the book is not an analytical history, Meyer does not treat this topic in depth; but he does note that budget appropriations for park acquisition and development did not begin to approach adequate levels until 1940, when Lathrop attempted to shame the legislature by pointing out that surrounding states were spending considerably more per acre on state parks than Minnesota. Iowa's expenditure, for instance, was then among the highest in the Midwest, representing \$7.65 per acre, while Lathrop's requested 1940 budget (\$204,000 as opposed to \$70,000 for 1939) amounted to an expenditure of only \$2.22 per acre!

Unfortunately, one cannot turn to *Iowa's State Parks* to find out what was happening on this side of the border at the same time. This is a very different book, just as useful in its own way, though clearly written with park visitors in mind. Wolf divides his subject parks by regions of the state: northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest Iowa. Official state parks, preserves, forests, and other units are included as well as some properties which are still called state parks but are now owned and/or managed by local entities, such as Swan Lake State Park which is managed by the Carroll County Conservation Board. Entries are arranged alphabetically by region. Each entry typically includes a detailed map, the address and telephone number of the agency in charge, a brief history of the park, a description of its physical features as well as noteworthy flora and fauna, activities offered in the park, and a brief list of publications one may consult for additional information.

To compile this book the author relied heavily on the brown-and-white park information brochures published by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The park maps, for instance, are the same as those that appear in park brochures, and much of the text is drawn from the same sources. These, of course, are distributed free by the DNR, but Wolf has made it extremely convenient for would-be visitors and avid park users to consult this body of information by gathering them in book form and adding additional items of interest. An appendix contains brief summaries of Iowa's geological and archeological past as revealed in many state parks. For those who want to know more about Iowa's birds, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources, there is a one-page bibliography, though I was disappointed not to find *Fragile Giants: A Natural History of the Loess Hills*, by Cornelia F. Mutel (University of Iowa Press, 1988) on the list.

Judged on their own terms, both books are welcome additions to the bookshelf. State parks, though heavily used, are often undervalued public assets. An 1895 speech by botanist Thomas Macbride has

often been cited as the genesis of Iowa's system. In the speech Macbride called for a return to the "once familiar public common" by establishing a network of rural parks. Today, we take state as well as national park systems for granted, but they represent decades of struggle to acquire and maintain public access to areas of scenic beauty and scientific interest. *Everyone's Country Estate* and *Iowa's State Parks* remind us that some of nature's finest features are close to home, and they encourage us to explore the world immediately at hand.

Holding the Moment: Mid-America at Mid-Century, by Don Ultang. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991. xiv, 193 pp. 163 photographs, index. \$34.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY DRAKE HOKANSON, LAKELAND COLLEGE

To historians, collections of news photographs are seldom of great use. A dusty file of prints and negatives from a large daily, or even a small Iowa weekly, is most often an assemblage of images of unique happenings, singular situations, and unusual personages who passed through town but briefly, and but once. News photographers were sent to capture the barn fire, the giant pumpkin, the politician stumping from the rear platform of a railroad car. Their photographs may tell us little about how people actually lived, or what their town, homes, and work were like.

But there have always been news photographers at work who have taken a longer view. Some people have wielded cameras with an aim toward things more universal, things more common; subjects that endure. Don Ultang was such a photographer, and *Holding the Moment: Mid-America at Mid-Century* is a good book about enduring subjects, Iowa's enduring subjects. During his stints with the *Des Moines Register* and the *Tribune* between 1940 and 1958 (with a few years out for the war), Ultang produced a body of work that goes beyond the usual in news photography. As a news photographer he was no doubt called upon to take photographs of all the standard stuff—the routine sports and ribbon cuttings—but Ultang also kept before his camera those subjects that would somehow be of lasting interest to Iowans, to midwesterners. *Holding the Moment* shows us mule-powered haying scenes from a hot summer day about 1940; kids scooping the loop in 1953; a muddy farmer standing in his house doorway, shovel in hand, attempting to rid the living room of the silt left by a Floyd River flood; snowy downtown street scenes in Des Moines during the opening hours of the Second World War.

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